Earth Circles

The Fruitful Garden

LESSON 6: FIELD TO FOOD

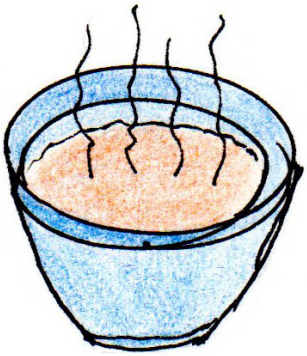
OVERVIEW:

Concept: We all depend directly on plants for much of our food. We can grow some of our food ourselves. There are ways to help people who do not have enough food.

Background for Teachers

LESSON AT A GLANCE:

Materials
Preparation



LESSON PLAN:

Opening Circle

Activity: Kids use butternut squash from their garden to make muffins and sell them at coffee hour. They may learn a Thanksgiving dance and teach it to interested adults.

Discussion
Story
Principles in Practice

Closing Circle

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Background

A seed is like a survival package for a new plant. The fleshy part of a seed is the dense nutrient supply for the seedling until it grows leaves and roots. Then it can make its own food and absorb nutrients and minerals from the soil. When we eat such foods as beans, corn or squash, we are using that nutrient supply for our own nutrition. Fortunately, plants produce huge amounts of seeds. Thus we are helping to keep plant populations under control when we eat seeds.

Both seeds and the plants themselves are food sources for various animals. For example, many birds feast on seeds but generally do not eat the leaves. Grazing animals such as deer eat large quantities of leaves with or without the seeds. Koala bears are really picky, with a select diet of eucalyptus leaves.

We grew corn, beans and squash, which can be used in a variety of ways. The dried corn kernels can be pulverized into flour for baking muffins, cornbread or tortillas. The flour also can be used to make chips, pones or cornmeal mush. Dried beans are used for soups and chili, and are added to a variety of soups and stews. Butternut squash is delicious baked in its shell or boiled and mashed with butter and cinnamon. It can be used to make bread, muffins, custards, and other healthy treats. Many Native American people depended on these three plants, the Three Sisters, for their food supply.

What Bedford UU Kids Did:

The squash from the Kids' garden was prepared by a Mom/teacher for use in the attached recipe. Kids measured, mixed, and put batter into paper liners in the muffin pans. The pans of muffin batter went to the kitchen for baking in the oven at 350 degrees F for 15-20 minutes. One teacher and one or two Kids accompanied their tray of muffins to the kitchen, put them in the oven and noted the time. Then they left the busy kitchen while the muffins baked. When done, they brought the muffins back to the classroom and allowed them to cool for ten minutes. Then muffins were placed in baskets or on platters and taken to coffee hour for sale at $1.00 each. Kids also sold squashes from their garden. They earned $120 and voted to buy a goat for Heifer International.

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MATERIALS:

For muffins:

- Recipe for squash muffins (attached at end)
- 12 muffin tins (one per team of two Kids)
- Ingredients (see recipe which makes a dozen…multiply to meet your needs)

For each team to make a dozen muffins:

- 12 Cupcake papers
- 1 Measuring cup
- 1 Bowl
- 1 Set of measuring spoons plus one large spoon
- Timer
- Access to oven

For coffee hour:

- Table and cloth
- Poster about muffin sale
- Change box and dollar bills
- Paper napkins
- Baskets or platters for muffins

For dance:

Small hand-held drum and stick

Book: *Keepers of Life* by Michael Caduto; story: *Indian Summer*

Preparation:

- Bake the squash until tender and let it cool. You will need one cup of squash for each dozen muffins. Scrap the squash pulp from the shell, mash and strain it. A Mom may volunteer to do this if asked.
- Set up the table where coffee hour is held.
- Have the circle of chairs ready in the classroom for opening discussion.
- Set up work stations for pairs of Kids on covered tables, as many as needed.
- Have recipe ingredients and measuring cups and spoons assembled on a separate supply table.
- Make a copy of the recipe for each Kid.

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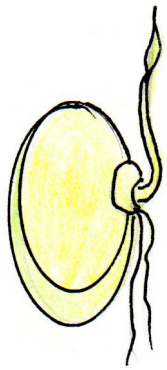
LESSON PLAN:

Opening Circle: Greet the Kids and note attendance. You may read aloud these few lines from Wendell Berry or have Kids repeat them after you.



> Sowing the seed, my hand is one with Earth.
> Wanting the seed to grow, my mind is one with the light.
> Hoeing the crop, my hands are one with the rain.
> Having cared for the plants, my mind is one with the air.
> Hungry and trusting, my mind is one with Earth.
> Eating the fruit, my body is one with Earth.

Discussion:

- Does this sketch about a growing seed represent an Earth Circle, or part of one?
- Why did we scatter the dead plants from our garden over the soil?
- What will this do for next year's garden?
- How does this garden honor our Seventh Principle?

Can Kids relate this sketch to their garden experience this year? Are they ready to try "eating the fruit" of their efforts? Tell them that today they can make muffins from the squash. Seeds have been scooped out of the squash and the flesh prepared for muffin making.

Activity 1: Muffin Making

Have some of the Kids done baking at home, or helped their Mom or Dad bake something good? How did they help? Was it fun?

1) Provide each Kid with a copy of the recipe and go over it with them all together.
2) Have Kids team up in groups of 2-3 and point out their work stations and the table full of supplies.
3) Have each group set up one muffin tin with paper liners for a dozen muffins. (one dozen/team to start - some teams may want to do a second dozen.)
4) Following the recipe, have each team mix up a batch of muffin batter.
5) Fill paper cups in tins ¾ of the way full.
6) One teacher and a couple of Kids bring muffin tins to the kitchen for baking for 15-20 minutes at 350 degrees F. They return to the classroom while muffins bake, watching the time so the muffins don't burn.

When muffins are done, let them cool for 10 minutes. Then put them on platters or in baskets for sale at coffee hour.

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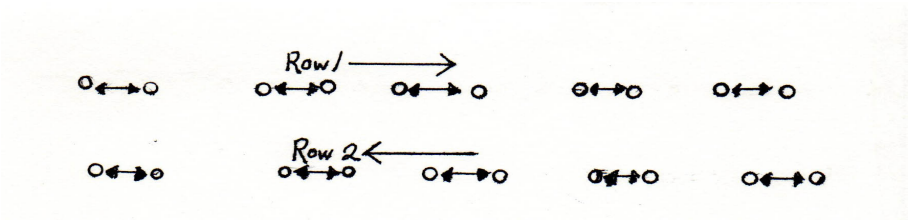
Activity 2: Dance of Thanksgiving

While muffins are baking, Kids may practice the Dance of Thanksgiving, a Native American ceremony for giving thanks. Some Kids may want to dance at coffee hour and teach it to interested adults. (Resource: **Keepers of Life**, Michael Caduto)

This dance is a thanksgiving ritual of the Seneca tribe of the Eastern Woodlands. The purpose is to celebrate the unity of all things, give thanks for all the gifts we receive from Earth, and to honor the circles and cycles of life essential for living in balance with Earth. With enough people, the dance is performed in two circles, one inside the other and rotating in opposite directions. Since our classes are small, Kids can link in two straight lines and slide back and forth instead of circling.

Tell the Kids about the purpose of the dance. Then they can learn how to do it. One Kid or the teacher or a volunteer does the drumming for the dance.



Kids stand and hold hands in one straight line. The teacher or one of the Kids plays a two-part drumbeat, alternating loud-soft, loud-soft…

1) Demonstrate a sideways shuffle step: Step to your left on the loud beat, then slide the right foot over on the soft beat.

2) Have the Kids do the step to the alternating drumbeat, moving to the left. Once they have mastered this step, have them reverse direction and move to the right, leading with the right footstep and sliding the left foot to bring their feet back together.

3) Tell the Kids this is a silent dance, so please no talking or other noises. Let us take gentle steps to tell Earth that we want to celebrate it and keep it well.

4) If there are enough Kids (6 or more), have them form two lines, one in front of the other. The two lines will move in opposite directions as they dance. Every few seconds have Kids change direction. Signal change with three rapid drum beats.

5) The dance is complete when the lines have done four shuffles in each direction. End the dance with a drum roll.

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Activity #3: Selling Muffins

When muffins are ready, Kids put them in baskets or on plates to take them to the table in the coffee hour room. One adult will be needed at the table at all times. Aim to have muffins available after the service, while people are enjoying coffee hour. During this time, some Kids can be selling muffins at the table or circulating with a basket of muffins. They can also sell extra squash, beans or corn.

Discussion:

Ask the Kids to return to the classroom when all the muffins are sold. They count their earnings and decide what to do with the money. Some options are contributing to the local Food Pantry or other such organization, to a food-related project such as Heifer International, or an organization that provides food to the homeless.

Do they have any comments on how it went?
Would they do this again?
Would they do things differently another time?

(*They should probably have already figured this out and it might be difficult to get them back to the classroom for this wrap up….especially since class time has probably ended…if they are like FPB)*

Principles in Practice:

Which of the Seven Principles would Kids say relate to this activity? How will we use the profits from the muffin sales to help some hungry people?

Story: If time permits, read the "Indian Summer" story aloud. (p.129, *Keepers of Life)*

Closing Circle:

Ask all present to repeat these words together:

Let the words of my mouth,
The meditations of my heart,
And the actions of my life be as one
With Mother Nature. Amen.

Jennifer Frost Butler, *Earth Prayers*, Harper, 1991

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Squash Muffin Recipe:

- Preheat oven 350 degrees F.
- Cream together: 1 stick sweet butter and 1 cup sugar.
- Add 2 eggs, one at a time, beating well.
- Add one cup of mashed squash and one tsp of vanilla and mix thoroughly.
- Separately, mix together 2 cups of flour and one tsp of baking soda.
- Add the dry mixture to wet ingredients and mix well.
- Fill paper-lined muffin tins ¾ full and bake for 15-20 minutes.
- Let cool for ten minutes after muffins are out of the oven.

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